

grad roots

grassroots
campus notes

FALL 2023
No. 1





Have you ever looked at the graduate student strikes in the news and wondered "Why hasn't UW-Madison gone on strike yet?"

That's because Madison grads don't have enough practice acting together as one in their own interests. We call that "being organized" into a union.

There's no shame in that, we all start without practice. But getting organized begins with you. Never pay any "union" here on campus who promises to lead you for your hard-earned money. Pool it with your friends or coworkers yourselves, and learn how to use it collectively for smaller wins first here in your department/lab/program.

Plus, to my fellow Queers and Brownies: demanding anti-racist action from progressives is NOT "Leftist infighting" any more than the George Floyd uprisings were "American infighting". Never let ANYONE tell you that you're being "too divisive" or "bad for Left unity" when you're standing up for yourself and your people. Leaders of TAA, WSB, and even UW-Madison have all said the same to grad students of color.

My hope is for this zine to express a broader slice of the world: one where you, your hopes, and your experiences matter. You deserve to speak for yourself, and nobody represents your interests better than you and your friends.

So please go and make excellent friends with coworkers who will have your back. Powerful relationships are ones that serve not just as escapes from the harsh world, but that help you confront and change it.

TABLE of CONTENTS

1. Foreword by

MYO Union!

2. Union Orientation

by *MYO Union!*

4. Guide to Quiet

Quitting by
Anonymous
Contributor

6. Maternity Leave by

Fuck You UW

7. Stay Safe Cheat

Sheet by
Anonymous
Contributor



Editors: *MYO Union!*

Fuck You UW

Cover: **Untitled** by

MYO Union!

**Unions at
UW-Madison**

&

YOU



But first, some useful vocabulary.

**“Organizing”
graduate labor**

means

***building a community
with the ability to
confront authority and
improve your working &
learning environment***

“Mutual aid”

is not “charity”.

***Mutual aid is about
building powerful
communities
for self-determination.***

*It may look like charity from the outside, but it is
wholly different in practice and principle*

“Retaliation”

is

***when your manager
worsens your
employment conditions
after you engage in
legal political activity***

Grad school is a workplace like any other

UW graduate students put in the work!

- You teach classes & grade student work
- You conduct state-of-the art research
- You write and win grants
- You write and publish papers
- You serve on department committees and oversee office work

Remember, the university works because you do!

You have the right to unionize

Under Wisconsin state law (s111.82), **you have the right to engage in “concerted activities for the purpose of collective bargaining or other mutual aid or protection.”**

Moreover, **the 1st Constitutional Amendment in the Bill of Rights applies to all persons on U.S. soil regardless of citizenship status.**

This means you have the right to:

- Talk to coworkers about living, learning, and working conditions.
- Organize your workplace to protect yourselves, assist each other, and improve your workplace for everyone.

...without fear of retaliation.

But Wisconsin's passage of Act 10 in 2011 restricted public sector union certification to point of powerlessness, while allowing their employers to ignore the bargaining table.

Some helpful resources & reference material

- Wisconsin FoodShare (SNAP benefits), child care assistance, public healthcare options, and more at [**access.wisconsin.gov**](http://access.wisconsin.gov)
- Learn your rights as a tenant and get help at [**TenantResourceCenter.org**](http://TenantResourceCenter.org)
- See if you qualify for a free cellphone plan under the federal [**Affordable Connectivity Program**](#) (aka “Obamaphone”)
- google and join your local [**Buy Nothing Project**](#) group if you're in need of an item and you don't want to spend money. Also check Craigslist.
- email [**BadgerMutualAidNetwork@gmail.com**](mailto:BadgerMutualAidNetwork@gmail.com) to join a cross-campus graduate mutual aid network; to connect with other independent, directly active organizers; to join a pre-existing mutual aid project (e.g. Academics' Free Diaper Distribution); or to start + announce your own.
- get a [**Madison Public Library**](#) card!!

How to quiet quit in your teaching - advice from an expert (Part I)

UW–Madison ██████████ department makes money by asking graduate workers to overwork themselves at every stage of the program, asking them to do too much coursework and too much teaching per semester. The ██████████ department is also increasing that workload over time, and benefits from directly exploiting teachers with a strong desire to do a good job (and will thus work beyond their contracted 20 hrs/week). Collective organizing is the way to roll back harmful policy, and in the meantime harm reduction efforts are necessary to offset these dangerous levels of overwork. Here are tips for how to reduce the amount of labor associated with your teaching to nearly nothing - or how to “quiet quit.”

The administrative side of teaching is unrelated to good pedagogy or learning outcomes - worse, these practices often inhibit student learning and exacerbate classist, racist, ableist, and sexist inequality. The most effective measure to reduce teaching work is to actively embrace abolitionist pedagogy, understanding that numerical grades, punitive attendance and extension policies, and the neurotic academic bureaucracy are carceral in nature. Try subverting these structures in your teaching practice, particularly if you are uncomfortable with rule-breaking. This is your chance to practice!

Tips for quiet quitting your teaching:

- **Practice methods for facilitating discussion on a short turnaround.** Test out practices not based on the lecture/reading content of a given week. For example, go in one day with a lesson plan that doesn't address the lecture content: a simple “what was the main argument of the reading,” think/pair/share and then group discussion. After these content-free lesson plans, debrief with yourself: what went well? How can you improve so that you can go into the next discussion with even less prep?
- **Build strong, honest relationships with your teaching team.** Get to know each other, and support & encourage each other to NOT perform unnecessary, harmful, or redundant teaching tasks. If you and your colleagues are aligned, you will be able to more effectively resist and undermine unfair demands from your supervisor. Go around “pick me” grad students who see themselves as rule enforcers
- **Do a thorough risk assessment with each different situation and supervisor.** What, specifically, am I afraid will happen if I take a particular course of action? Is it even possible for my supervisor to notice it? If they found out I did/did not do it, what is the likelihood they will reprimand me? If they did wish to reprimand me, what consequences are actually possible (given faculty overwork and the rapid cycle of appointment change)? Never act rashly without


conducting a rational risk assessment, and never let your compliance with rules be dictated by ungrounded fears

- **Cultivate a persona of naive rigor and neuroticism in meetings with your supervisor.** Many instructors have teaching practices that stem from their own untreated issues (i.e. micromanagement, throwing teaching teams under the bus, punitive policies toward students). Academics value words more than actions, so if you seem to behave in a way they value they will look less closely at your teaching practices (giving you more freedom)
- **Routinely email students off-listserv.** Many faculty instructors read your emails, and will someday interfere with your approach to teaching. This surveillance was used to bar E-100 instructors from teaching on zoom during the height of COVID-19. Blind-copying your students creates conditions of freedom for you to pursue different modalities or cancel class without being nagged or pressured

... to be continued in Part II: *Quiet quitting for ethical education*



~~More~~ **Some helpful resources & reference material**

- “Power Mapping and Analysis” by Anita Tang
 - “Mutual Aid” compiled by Josie Sparrow
 - “Approaches to Organising: Decentralised, Directed Network and Strike Circles Models” by Robyn Gulliver
 - “Jemez Principles for Democratic Organizing” by Southwest Network for Environmental and Economic Justice (SNEEJ)
 - “10 ways white supremacy wounds white people” by Greg Elliot
 - “On Conflict and Consensus: a handbook on Formal Consensus decisionmaking” by C.T. Butler and Amy Rothstein
 - “The Progressive Plantation: racism inside white radical social change groups” by Lorenzo Kom’boa Ervin
 - “Emergent Strategy” by adrienne maree brown
 - zines by Neighborhood Anarchist Collective
- 

YOU WON'T GET RESEARCH FUNDS
EVEN IF YOU APPLY THIS
YEAR.

BECAUSE...

WE LET YOU USE
A FELLOWSHIP FOR PAID
MATERNITY LEAVE. YOU TOOK

OFF AN ENTIRE SEMESTER TO HAVE
A CHILD

WITHOUT DOING

SO, IT WOULDN'T
TO GIVE YOU FUNDS

BE FAIR
FOR
BUT
BRING
SO

YOUR RESEARCH,
DEFINITELY
YOUR BABY BY
WE CAN
MEET
HER.

MATERNITY
LEAVE



ARE YOU SURE
YOU WANT TO
SLEEP HERE
AGAIN?

STAY SAFE CHEAT SHEET

Quiet quitting for community health,
COVID safety, & disability Justice

Know Your Power:

Tips! [Immediately Actionable]

- ★ **Don't** use your supervised listserv – create an independent email list for communication with your students and denormalize surveillance
- ♣ Under UW policy, you can meet remotely or outside no more than 4x. Use these up!!
- ★ Then, keep going remote whenever you need or want to! Playing dumb goes a long way :)
- ★ When weather permits, you can hold class and/or office hours outside
- ★ Survey your students to find out what **THEY** want to do: it's their health, and that gives you a democratic mandate.

Interrogate your learned self-surveillance! You know good COVID practices, and you know what's best for you, your team and your students. Why do you think you need to ask permission? Don't tell on yourself! The people above you in the workplace hierarchy only see some of what you do. What can you do on your own, quietly, to keep our community safe?

What does your supervisor

***actually* see?**

Let's talk SICK LEAVE

You have the legal right to **UNCONDITIONAL** time off from work when you're sick: no emails, no finding your own subs, no guilt! Yet UW-Madison administrators make it hard to access your guaranteed sick days – know your rights, and be firm!

EMAIL TEMPLATE

"Dear [my supervisor] and [dept. chair]: I am sick, and unable to perform my duties/teach. I will be taking my guaranteed 96 hours of sick leave starting tomorrow morning, including email correspondence. Please forward this email to the correct parties as notice. Sincerely, [me]"

how to say "NO" to your advisor + supervisor (your manager)

- Tips:**
- ★ Consult trusted peers! Teach each other.
 - ★ Tie your decision to shared values (or even a departmental mission statement).
 - ★ Be tactically empathetic to encourage connection.
 - ★ Articulate that you've put a lot of thought into your decision.

Defying someone with power over you can feel scary at first, but it is important to stand up for yourself to protect your health and dignity.

